

Reviewer Expectations and Scoring Application

Summary:

The purpose of the application screening process and the external technical review of applications is to obtain the best professional judgments regarding each application submitted to the program for funding. Reviewers are expected to draw upon their expertise in evaluating applications according to the criteria in the application that is supported by documentation drawn directly from the application. The review process involves many stages of sifting and weighing, but the reviewer is the primary source of objective assessment and bears a large responsibility for making an accurate evaluation. Reviewers must always be conscious that their evaluations will form the basis of recommendations made at higher levels of review.

As a reviewer, you will be expected to:

- Read all applications in their entirety.
- Follow all instructions provided.
- Review only the information in the applications assigned and do not attempt to introduce other materials.
- Provide constructive written comments that provide meaningful information to the applicant; do **not** provide suggestions for improvement.
- Provide a numerical score for each criterion.
- Provide statements of strengths and weaknesses that (1) justify the score awarded for the section and (2) are consistent with each criterion being rated. Statements of strengths and weaknesses must be in complete grammatically correct sentences. This is especially necessary if the reviewer is awarding a very high or very low score in an area.
- Treat all applications in a fair and equitable manner.
- Provide a total score for each application that accurately reflects the reviewer's judgment and is based on the selection criteria and competitive priorities (if any).
- As a reviewer, your main question is: Does the application address the selection criteria?

Scoring Applications

- The numerical scores to an applicant's response to the criteria must be consistent with your written comments. Comments and scores should reflect the same overall assessment.
- Scores should be checked for accuracy to ensure that the appropriate point scale was used.
- Comments should both praise strong areas as well as critique weak ones. Comments are most helpful when they provide specific feedback on why something was strong or weak rather than simply describe or reiterate what the applicant stated. Remarks not only should tie directly with the resulting score, but also give an applicant vital feedback for writing future applications.
- Comments should indicate whether the application's response to the selection criteria is missing, poor, average, good, or excellent.
- You are reading with a purpose: To extract information from the text and evidence provided within the application.
- Reviewers should rate each criterion by entering an appropriate numerical score within the given range. It is vital that reviewers give careful consideration to numerical ratings. A fraction of a point can make the difference between an application being funded or not. **The best procedure is to consider the mid-point of the rating scale as "just adequate."** From this

anchor point, ratings can be increased or decreased on the basis of strengths and weaknesses of the application. This general approach will foster the internal consistency between a reviewer's scores and narratives and the comparability of scores across reviewers.